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LIGHT ON A DARK QUESTION.

To the Editor of The N. Y. Tribune.

SIR: It is stated that the flash expression, "He's a very nice man, but he can't keep a hotel," now so in vogue, originated with the Christys. I am unable to say whether it did or not, but until within twentyfour hours I have not heard the phrase myself in more than half a dozen years, but as many as ten or a dozen years ago, if not more, I heard it often used by com-mon men in Western New-York, in their joking conunch men in Western New-York, in their joking conversations. The phrase was common then, or at least. I heard it where I hved in Palmyra, Wayne County, N. Y., and many other similar ones that have not yet reached the city, uttered by real rough wits on the canal, in bar-rooms, and in the stores.

Your traly,

OBSERVER.

ANTECEDENTS OF THE FRENCH EMPRESS.—The French have discovered, in some of the old Spanish law journals, very interesting items regarding the antecedents of the Empress Eugenie. They have ascertained that her father cied about three years before she was born—at least such is the inference, for her 32d birthday (according to the Moniteur) was celebrated on the 4th of June, and her father died in 1823. Mcreover, a divorce between her father and mother, resulting from mutual accusations of adultery, had been pronounced as far back as 1813, although they subsequently lived together, and the divorce was ultimately annulled.

The proprietors of six religious newspapers in Research

mately annulled.

The proprietors of six religious newspapers in Boston, have resolved to charge, after the list of January, for publishing religious notices, obituaries, &c. They divide this matter into two heads, the first comprising appeals for benevolent objects, and obituaries, he if a cent a word; the second, ecclesiastical notices, resolutions of churches, and the like, one cent a word.

At a Christmas Eve party, given at Mr. Stam's, a few miles in the country, on Friday evening last, an old lady 97 years of age, took the floor and waltzed around the room, until her partner, a young man of 25, was completely exhausted and had to sit down. The phrase of "go it while you're young, for when you get old you can't," is thus proved to be false as well as inslease.

Men are frequently like tea-the real strength and goodness are not properly drawn out till they have been a short time in hot water.

New York Daily Tribune.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 1858.

TO CORRESPONDENTS. No notice can be taken of Anonymous Communications, ever is intended for insertion must be suthenticate name and address of the writer—not necessarily for tion, but as guaranty for his good faith.

Our prospect for New-Year's sleighing was very dubious last night. At 10 o'clock a drizzling rain was meltisg off the four inches of snow which came the night before; Broadway and the other most traveled streets were filled with mud, and all was dreary and dismal. Then it grew colder, and there was snow in the air. But at midnight there was a little more rain, and at 1 o'clock a hatle more sleet. It is impossible to prophesy.

The reader will observe several important fee tures in the proceedings of the Common Council yesterday. To day is the last chance, and they will improve it to the utmost. Watch them.

Gov. King is brooding over a proclamation recalling the "millt ary" who are encamped on Staten Island.

Mr. DougLas is the guest of the city, and has heard that virtuous citizen, Mr. Alderman Mc-Spedon, read aloud the asseveration that the people of New-York regard him and his public course with unqualified admiration and sympathy; after which he took the precious document from Mr. McSpedon, and put it in his breeches pocket to keep as a treasure for his posterity. Apart from this official visit, he has received the cards of some noticeable and some unnoticeable persons, and will to-day take his stand in the City Hall, amid the cold splendors of the Governor's Room, to shake hands with the Democratic masses-a transaction which would be fatiguing to a man of muscle less tough and compact.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Douglas is now, par excellence, the representative man of the Democracy of the Free States. A man of the people, without much superfluous refinement of mind or manner, ready to take a chew of tobacco er a drink of whisky with any fellow in the first barroom, he carries off in triumph the facile admiration of the rowdy crowd who adorn the lower walks of human society; while the pugilistic quality and prodigious force of his intellect, the reckless quickness of his attack, and the unequalled game and pluck of his defense, render him a formidable figure in every contest in which he may bear a part. It is true that his mental constitution, as exhibited in his political career, is not of a sort to command the admiration of severe critics or to insure him a place among the great statesmen and orators of the country. It lacks at once the charm of the imagination and the fascinations of both wit and sentiment; while it seems equally destitute of the guiding influence of a sacred love of truth, and a careful observance of the lines which sunder her domains from those of falsehood. Nor has Mr. Douglas evinced the in a great popular leader; but in gladiatorial displays of talent, and in the unscrupulous rough-and-tumble conflict of partisan politics, he is without a peer; and accordingly he is the hero, and, at this moment, the indisputable chief of the Northern Democracy.

This is none the less true because the throng who surround him here does not contain the recognized managers of the Democratic organization in New-York. It is none the less true because Tammany Hall stands aloof from him; while the Cus tom-House and the Post-Office are alike slow and cold in their civilities. Indeed it is all the more true on that account. The officeholders and managers of the party, whatever may be their private feelings, do not dare to make themselves conspicus, scarcely even to be seen, among the friends of the Illinois Senator. They know the penalty that would attach to such an offense against their common master, who already regards them with just suspicion. Besides, these gentlemen, trained to an easy and universal skepticism, and ready to embrace all principles with equal fervor, have as yet no enthusiastic respect for that peculiar dogma of Popular Sovereignty with which Mr. Douglas has become identified. When it gets into power, they will doubtless be its zealous adherents but as yet they are not ready to become mar tyrs for it, and to lose their pleasant offices and salaries as its confessors. Hence the curious fact that, while Mr. Douglas is the favorite of the rank and file of the Democracy, be is regarded with icalousy and distrust by the officers and fuglemen By way of explanation and apology, the latter ac cuse him of disloyalty to the party, and of a dispo sition to monopolize and direct its organization fo his own profit. They charge him with being demagogue and a despot-views which, of course, will be likely to undergo a great change should be ever come into power and have patronage to bestow upon his followers.

But, as we say, the masses of the party do not i the least share this feeling. It does not make them shudder to be told that Mr. Douglas is by nature a demagogue and a despot. What they appreciate is the fact that he has besten all his opponents in Illinois, and above all that he has put to total rout a Federal Administration which they both despise and are ashamed of. They like the man, and more than that, they like the doctrine of Popular Sovereignty. The simple truth (and we are none the less impartial witnesses because w oppose both the party and the principle) is that this doctrine is now the living faith of the Democratic party of the North. They hold to it warmly, fanatically almost as an essential and most vital part of the Democratic creed; and in this belief they are beyond the capacity of change. With this universal sentiment of the masses of his party to support him, it is a matter of very little importance to Mr. Douglas that he is feared and hated by its official leaders, and that many great men among them affect to sneer at his position and pretensions A man of his power, with such a backing, cannot easily be put down; and we fancy that these Democratic magnates who have undertaken to put him down will presently find it out.

We have before us a printed copy of the complaint lately filed in the Supreme Court of the City and County of New-York, by the Cumberland Coal and Iron Compary against Allen M. Sherman, Wm. B. Dean and the Hoffman Steam Coal Company of Allegany County Mary and, and a most extraordinary documen it is Very distinct, however lurid is the light which it throws upon the manage ment, or rather non-management and mismanagement, of the great moneyed corporations which have their center of operations in Wall street, and

full and complete, though we are sorry to say not very satisfactory, is the explanation it affords of the present state of the stock market and of the ruin of thousands, widows and orphans included, whose money has been vested on the strength of respectable names, but lost not to say stolen, by Wall street operators.

The Cumberland Coal and Iron Company was incorporated as long ago as 1841, by the Legislature of Maryland, for the purpose of mining and selling coal. Its mines, coal lands and most of its other real property were situated in Allegany County, Maryland, though its principal office for the sale of coal and the management of its financial affairs has been, and is, in this city. A very large capital has been invested in this business, represented by a capital stock, at par value, of \$5,000,000, and by \$400,000 of funded debt. Its property consists of a large body of coal lands, containing the great vein of the Cumberland region, very favorably situated for mining and transportation; a railway, which has cost half a million of dollars, connecting the mines with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, at the City of Cumberland; and of rolling stock, machinery, boats, wharves, &c., which have cost near another half million. The bus ness of mining and transporting coal has been in operation for ave years past, and has included for the last four years an annual average of about two hundred thousand tuns. The Company was regarded as a very promising speculation, bat during the panic a year ago, the Company stopped payment and made an assignment for the benefit of its creditors. Subsequently the stockholders advanced \$243,765 to pay off the floating debt and resumed the management of their affairs, which resumption soon after resulted in the discovery of the alleged frauds and breaches of trust which form the subject of the complaint before us. This complaint sets out that in March, 1854, one Andrew Mehaffey was chosen President and Treasurer of the Company, and that in the February following Allen M. Sherman was chosen a Director to fill vacancy; and that these two persons continued by repeated reelections to fill these two offices down to the 29th of May last, when Sherman resigned, Mehaffey having been on the 1st of May superseded as Treasurer by the Directors, but holding on as President till the 7th of June, when he was superseded by the stockholders.

It would appear from the allegations of the com plaint that from the moment Sherman came into the direction, he was suffered by his co-Directors to assume almost the entire management of the affairs of the Company, and that Mehaffey, who is represented in the complaint as poor and necessitous, was made his tool by means of an increase of salary, allowed him by Sherman, but without authority therefor, from \$5,000 to \$7,000, and by additional sums secretly lent him by Sherman (without the knowledge of the Directors, but studiously concealed from them), out of the funds of the Company, to the amount of \$9,232 77, of which \$2,036 45 was allowed to be taken by Mehaffey only eleven days before the assignment, and while the Company was struggling to sustain itself by immense sacrifices. After the resumption, Sherman undertook to settle this debt by raising Me-haffar's the to, ooo, from march 20, 1855, Mehaffey having previously settled Sherman's account in an equally indulgent manner; and it was the discovery of this proceeding by the Directors, and their refusal to sanction it, which led to the resignation of Sherman, and the investigations and discoveries which have led to the present suit.

The way in which Sherman acquired his contro over the affairs of the Company, is thus stated, The Directors to whom the stockholders had intrusted the management of their interests, at the suggestion of Sherman himself, within six weeks after he became a Director, adopted a by-law by which they constituted an executive committee of three members, to be nominated by the President and confirmed by the Directors—the President also to be a member, two of the four to be a quorum to transact business. The President nominated Sherman along with Francis Bloodgood and Joseph Torrey, two salaried employees of the Company, as this committee, and those persons, on this authority, assumed to act as such down to May last; Bloodgood and Torrey, however, generally taking no part in the doings of this Committee, which though it kept no record of its acts, appears have assumed pretty much the entire management of the Company's affairs, only employing the Board of Directors to sanction and give a legal character to a part of its acts.

On the 9th of October, 1855, on the motion of Sherman, the Directors appointed a committee of six, of whom only three acted, Sherman and Mehaffey being two of that number, to visit the lands of the Company in Maryland, and to see if some of them might not be advantageously sold, and to report such lots, by routes and bounds Sherman, as Chairman of this Committee, reported to the Directors, that they had better sell 1,5484 acres, which were bounded and described in the report, including a tract known as the Hoffman mine. The report represented that the Company's railroad, " with its present equipment," was capable of performing twice or three times its then amount of transportation, and that, as the Company possessed seven thousand acres of coal lands, wholly unnecessary for their own operations, indeed "worse than useless," as the report expressed it, by driving capital to other portions of the coal field, and thus preventing any increase of business on the Company's road, therefore, they had better sell the tract above described, to somebody who would work the mines, and pay the Company for the use of their road in carrying the coal to market. Upon this report, the Directors anthorized a sale by the President and Secretary (which latter officer was not a director, but a mere recording clerk, and who disclaims having acted at all under this resolution, or being called upon to do so, or consulted about it) for not less than \$200,000, and also authorized them to enter, on behalf of the Company, into stipulations and coverants for the development and working of the property to be sold in accordance with the suggestions of the report. It being alleged by Mehaffey and Sherman that

they had made great efforts to sell, that no offer was made for the lands at the price fixed, but that there was a chance to sell a less quantity for \$150,000, or thereabouts, on the 15th of January. 1856, the Directors authorized the President and Secretary to sell accordingly; authorizing the President also "to modify the terms and conditions of " this sale at his discretion." Thereupon, on the 22d of April, Mehaffey proceeded to convey to Allen, Mr. Sherman, and one Wm. B. Dean, to the former five undivided eighths, to the latter three undivided eighths of 1,215 acres of the Company's land, the Hoffman Mine included. The

bonds of \$1,000 each, issued by the Company. upon which an extension had just been obtained by Sherman's agency of eight years from the lat of January, 1856, at a lose to the Company of \$30,000. With respect to this sale, which was confirmed at a Directors' meeting, at which only the members of the Executive Committee and one other Director were present, the complaint alleges not only that it was fraudulent in disposing of a very valuable property for a very inadequate price. had that price been actually paid, to a party who, as a Director of the Cumberland Company, was disqualified to buy of it, but, moreover, that the pretended consideration was never paid, but that Sherman is now, and always has been in the interval, indebted to the Company for moneys of theirs appropriated to his own private use, in a greater sum than the pretended payments ever made to the Company for this purchase. The \$28,000 of cash was met by \$1,000 already paid by Sherman, and for which he had received credit, for money of the Company previously borrowed by him, and by three notes of \$9,000 each, which were met as they became due by moneys taken by Sherman out the Company's treasury, or by liabilities contracted on the Company's property, and still outstanding. The bonds of the Company are still outstanding and still unprovided for, except by the undertaking of Sherman & Dean to pay the interest and take

At the same time with this sale of lands, Mehaffey also made a contract with the purchasers by which the Company stipulated to transport the coal of the mines sold over their road at rates which, as the complaint alleges, impose an actual loss upon every tun of coal carried.

Having thus secured his mine and his transportstion, Sherman bought materials, fixtures, &c., for it-so the complaint alleges-which he caused to be charged to the Company, of which he was a Director, to the amount of \$11,234 50, adding other advances subsequently, out of the Company's funds, to the amount of \$4,687, all still unpaid. He also expended out of the Company's funds \$29,000 for branch roads to accommodate his own mines, and \$38,000 more for coal cars, notwithstanding his statement in his report that the Company's road, with "its present equipment," could perform twice or thrice the business done upon it. He also made other large expenditures on transportation account in the purchase of wharves, &c., which expenditures and appropriations of the Company's money to Sherman's own use are alleged to have been the sole cause of its failure.

Thus provided with means of operating, Sherman & Dean have mined about a hundred thousand tuns of coal, and sent it to New-York to be sold. In August last they organized themselves, under a general act of Maryland, into "The Hooffman "Steam Coal Company"-retaining themselves 4,990 of the 5,000 shares of the stock of the Company, and distributing the other ten shares among ome citizens of Maryland-thus providing stockholders and directors for the new Company.

The complaint prays that the sale to Sherman & Dean and the transportation contract may be nor space to specify. Suffice it to say, that it charges against Sherman (at the time of the assignment), a debt to the Company for its money appropriated to his own use (over and above the \$28,000 which formed the cash portion of the consideration for the lands, and which remained wholly unpaid) of \$20,000, whereas he reported himself on the 31st of December following, he being assignee along with Mehaffey and Bloodgood. as having been at the time of the assignment a creditor for \$19,200, and as having paid himself by selling bonds to his sister, Ann Parish, at a discount of forty per cent.

On this complaint the case seems to look rather dark for Mr. Sherman. When he answers and sends us his answer, we shall duly report what he has to say for himself.

The Court, indeed, has dismissed the complaint as against the Hoffman Company as being a Maryland Corporation not within their jurisdiction, and has also intimated that the chief relief needed by the plaintiff, namely, repossession of the land, must be sought in Maryland, where we believe proceedings have already been commenced. But the complaint still stands good against Mr. Sherman, and seems to demand an answer on his part not merely on legal but on moral grounds.

Which of the Christian races that now occupy the country will succeed the Turks in the control of the region they now rule in Europe? It cannot be the Albanians, rough mountaineers, unruly and fond of plunder, one-half of them Mohammedans, the other half, mostly Roman Catholics, are on that account already separated by a wide gulf from the Greek Christians of Greek or Slavonic race. These Albanians generally live upon pretty good terms with their Mohammedan brethren, are as great robbers and savages as they, and are the only Christians that will serve the Porte in time of war, and that have, so far, been allowed to do so. The Roumans, having never been subjected to the direct authority of the Porte, have not at any time shown great interest in the fate of the remaining Christian races of Turkey. They are, besides, too isolated by position and nationality to extend their power and influence south of the Danube. In an anti-Turkish insurrection south of that river, the Roumans could scarcely interfere successfully in favor of the Christians until they had been themselves freed, by a revolution, from the yoke of Boyars and princes appointed by foreign powers. There remain the Greeks and the Slavonians. The first, though some of them dream of the revival of a Byzantine Empire, have but a poor chance. With the exception of the Kingdom of Greece, they do not occupy any compact portion of the continent. The three millions of Greeks that may be found altogether in the Levant, mostly occupy small islands and a narrow strip of coast. Their mercantile instinct has preserved these positions, to which they have clung with successful tenacity. while the inland country of Macedonia and Thracia has been conquered by Slavonians, and that of Asia Minor by Turks. The Greeks of to-day are. in fact, nothing but merchants, forming, in most parts of the territory occupied by them, the commercial class of the towns which exports the articles produced by cultivators belonging to other nations, and supplies them with imported articles. They are too dispersed, and numerically too weak, ever to be able to claim dominion over the other nationalities occupying Turkey. They may join to Greece Crete and the smaller islands, but that will be all. But after the Albanians, Roumans and Greeks.

paid in cash, and the assumption by the grantees | European Turkey, and in them, at last, we find a laws sgainst the slave-trade, but the practical of

of the payment of the principal and interest of 112 compact and at least numerically strong buly of people, capable, if united, and well led, to drive every Turk into the sea without the assistance of either Greek, Arnaut or Rouman. There are 5,300,000 of them, and there are, moreover, three and a half millions of Serbians and Croats under and a hall murous of Austrian dominion, who might join them. They alone occupy nearly three-fourths of all Europea Turkey, forming a compact country from sea to me It is true, they speak two different dialects; but they are very nearly related, and the one, the Bulgarian, is so utterly ruined that it will very some cede to the Serbian the honor of becoming the written language for all the Siavonians of Turkey. It is true, the Bulgarians have for centuries past excelled in nothing but passive obedience good Christians, they call themselves on account of their submission to all insults and injuries but their submission to an influence of popu-they are now awakening. Their treasure of popu-lar writings, unsurpassed by any but the Homers poems of ancient Greece, has at once convered hem a place in the literature of Europe. The combine great sagacity and intellectual capability of development with a quality seldom to be form in the Christians of Turkey-desperate courses They have, so far, managed their political business rather better than the Frenchified and pseudo-civil ized Boyars of Moldavia and Wallachia. They have a strong feeling of nationality, and strong sympathies with the Serbians out of the principals, whether under Turkish or Austrian rule. Here, then, the regeneration of the Illyrian peninsula will take its starting point, if it is to take place at all; and if not, that country, with its dependencies, is to be parcelled out to the great powers of Europe in a manner similar to that proposed by the late Emperor Nicholas.

The Serbian prople have lately compelled their Prince to call a National Assembly. Although the regulations made for the proceedings of the body are no better than shackles, the fact that the Assembly is called is itself a proof of weaksen in the Government; and we shall be surprised if the Serbien peasants and cowherds who will assemble at Belgrade, do not soon break through all these regulations. The meeting of such a Assembly, at the very moment when the Serbies in Bosnia are in open rebellion, when the Bulgarians are organizing themselves into a nation, when Montenegro is barely at a truce with the Turks, when Candia is in arms, may be of da cisive importance, and may form the point of crystallization round which will cluster the signs of new vitality among the Slavonic population of Southern Europe, and from which will date the second history of a nation whose first and heroic era was ended on the field of Kossovo nearly fre hundred years ag >.

The characteristic of our present Federal Al-

ministration appears to be imbecility. Except is

the matter of collecting taxes, making loans,

spending money and running the nation into debt the Federal Government, in the hands of Cam and Buchanan, has fallen into a state of supended animation. It suffers under a syncope, which it is not easy to distinguish from deal secut. Everything undertaken by Mr. Buchanse has proved a failure. The great object to which he devoted the youthful energies of his Administration was the forcing a Slave-State Constitution upon the Territory of Kansas. This project, in spite of all the energies of the Administration brought to bear upon it-one of the few things in which the Administration he shown any energy-most an nally failed. What little force the Adminis tration had left after this event, it employed in an effort to prevent the return of Douglas to the United States Senate, it being to his defection that the Kansas defeat was ascribed-at least so much of it as grew out of the refusal of the House of Representatives to join in forcing on the people of Kanasa a State Constitu-tion which they had expressly repudiated. But the Administration succeeded no better in Illinois than it had done in Kansas. It found no supporters in either, except the set of officebeen in everything else that the Administration has undertaken. The fillibusters laugh alike at the proclamations of the President and at the feeble efforts of the Federal officers to stop thes. Fillibustering vessels sail now from Mobile and nos from New Orleans, with perfect impunity. The only thing actually done to interrupt their operations was done by Commodore Paulding. He is praised and thanked by the Government of Nicars gua, but is disavowed at home, and left to beind himself at his own expense against the law-suits which the disappoint fillibusters are bringing against him. In the face and eyes of a law of the United States which nobody, till the accession of Mr. Buchanan, had dreamed even of evading or violating, three hundred African claves (more or less) have been landed on the coast of Georgia; and the whole staff of Federal officers in that Sate and in South Carolina is vainly employed in endeavoring to get some clue to their whereshouts. In fact, the organ of Mr. Buchapan at the seat of the Federal Government frankly proclaims that, under the Administration of Mr. Buchanas, our Federal system is a failure. Undoubtedly it is: and it is hard to say where two more years of such wretebed imbecility may land us. In the cases of Kansas and Ibinois, it cannot be doubted that the Government did the best it could; but, in those two cases they had the disadvantage of the very worst kind of a cause. Far abler and more energetic men than even their paid flatterers ever pretended Mr. Cass or Mr. Buchanan to be, might naturally enough bave failed in the attempt to stitute themselves in the place of the people of Kansas, or even in the place of the pseudo-Democratic minority of the people of Illinois, who, under that system of fraud, which seems to been regularly adopted as a part of the tee tics of the pseudo-Democratic party throughout the Union, usurp for themselves the choice de majority of the Illinois Legislature. But shall we say to the total failure of the Administra tion to enforce the laws against fillibustering the African slave-trade, and of the headlong page at which they are pressing the nation into priva as well as public bankruptcy? Incapable as this

Administration is, not able, even with all the

patronage at its disposal, to keep the leadership of

the party that placed it in power, there is, per-haps, something more to be taken into account

than mere imbecility. Mr. Buchanan may be such

pected of playing into the hands of that large class

of his political friends to whom the dissolution of

the Union is the first object. Defeated in all their

attempts at secession, it would seem that with the

connivance of Mr. Buchanan, the Nullifiers were

now bent on a practical dissolution of the Union, a practical destruction of the Feb.

eral authority by paralyzing all its powers

They despair of inducing Congress to repeal &